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FORTY MILLION FRENCHMEN

By Felix Morley

The French general election of November 10, coming so closely on the heels of our own, offers a comparison which is highly flattering to the stability of American political institutions. At a time when it is fashionable to deride so many of our own procedures as "reactionary" some analysis of the French outcome becomes doubly important.

While France has finally worked out a new Constitution, eliminating some of the weaknesses which helped to bring disaster to the Third Republic, the new organic law of course contains no provision against the evil of a multiplicity of parties. No democratic constitution can attempt to stipulate the number or character of the political parties operating within the constitutional framework. This is a matter to be decided by the native good sense of the citizens.

The misfortune is that, in altering the form of their government, French political leadership has remedied structural weaknesses without improving the quality of national political thought. This does not represent a gain for national security. It is too much like increasing the power and speed of automobiles without simultaneous consideration of driver capacity. The more excellent the mechanism, the more dangerous it may prove to be, if handled ineptly.

The mechanical virtues and faults of the latest French Constitution need not concern us here. What demands emphasis -- but has been little discussed in the public press -- is that in the first general election under the new organic law there appeared the same multiplicity of parties which was so instrumental in the weakness and decay of pre-war France. As a result the next National Assembly, though seemingly better designed as a legislative body than was the case in the Third Republic, will actually prove as chaotic and governmentally incompetent as the type of Chamber which has been discarded.

This is tragic in itself. But the outcome is the more deplorable because there is now one well-organized, well-led party which masquerades as a normal, national political grouping but is actually interested only in capturing control of the government for revolutionary purposes.

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Operating under the protection of a democratic Constitution the undeniable objective of the French Communist Party -- like that of Communist parties in all nations not yet under Soviet control -- is to destroy the political system which protects it.

II

In the French election of November 10 the Communist Party took first place, even though it polled only about one third of the total vote. Comment of the wishful thinking type so popular with Americans has concentrated on the second rather than the first of these two facts. It is pointed out that the Communists, by a small margin, will hold the largest single bloc of seats in the new French Parliament. But this is discounted by emphasizing that two-thirds of the French electorate are still non-Communist.

The Russian press analysis, however, is more intelligent. In the words of the Moscow Izvestia, the French people have delivered "a cruel blow at reaction and recognized the Communist Party as the leader of the whole democratic movement in France." By "reaction" Izvestia of course means representative government, which must be discredited before the minority dictatorship of the Communists can take over.

With that single qualification this Russian interpretation is seen to be both accurate and shrewd. The French people, because they do not follow the two-party system, have inadvertently given the Communist Party effective minority leadership, much as the German people, also unwittingly, gave the Nazi Party effective minority leadership in the Reichstag just 14 years ago. Maurice Thorez, the able leader of French Communism, may be expected to exploit this advantage approximately as Hitler did. For the methods as well as the philosophy of Nazism and Communism are practically identical. There is a distinction without a difference between the two dictatorial systems.

The point to watch now is the manner in which the French Communists, working in concert with Moscow, will exploit their victory. As the largest single party they have a right to demand the Premiership, but need not at the moment press this claim strongly. If they are included in the government -- and obviously it is difficult to exclude the party with the largest parliamentary representation -- the Communists can then demand key ministerial positions which actually mean much more than titular control.

One executive post of obvious importance now is the Foreign Ministry. If occupied by a Communist this would mean a 50-50 division in the Big Four -- the United States and Britain on one side; Russia and France

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on the other. It is no accident that the Left Wing is attempting to oust Bevin in England on the heels of the triumph of Communism in France. The issue of an isolationism forced on America by Europe is already looming just over the political horizon.

French Communism, however, is interested in Cabinet posts other than Foreign Affairs. There is Interior, which controls the police. There is Education -- from the long range viewpoint the sweetest plum of all. As one Pope acceptable to Moscow put it:

> "'Tis education forms the common mind:
> Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined."

III

It is the multiplicity of parties, and nothing else, which gave the French Communists the advantage they will now capitalize -- if that reactionary verb can be pardoned in this connection. On a straight showdown between Communists and non-Communists, on a two-party basis, the former would have come out a hopeless minority, with no title to claim supervision of even the most innocuous branch of administration.

Actually, however, a dozen parties contested for the 618 seats which will compose the new National Assembly. According to returns now virtually complete, though not yet officially verified, the largest single bloc is that of the 183 seats captured by the Communists. Next come the comparatively conservative Popular Republicans, with 162. In third place is the moderately leftist Socialist Party, cut down to 101. Then the rightist Republican Party of Liberty and its affiliates, with 85. In fifth place the Radicals -- really middle-of-the-road -- with 63. Colonial splinter parties account for the remaining seats.

Simple addition on the margin of this analysis will show how difficult it is to form any sort of stable government on this basis. There must, of course, be a coalition. But the only two parties which together could command a majority (310) are the Communists and the Popular Republicans, which mix like oil and water, or like Pepper and Hoover, to make the comparison more vivid.

With support from the small colonial parties a Communist-Socialist government would be possible, if the Socialists are now ready for the kiss of death. Equally possible is a three-party conservative coalition excluding both Communists and Socialists. Such a government, however, would be pitifully weak. It would command a bare arithmetical majority and could remain in office only by continuous concessions, by taking pains not to alienate a single supporter at a moment when the great need of France is positive policy, superior to narrow self-interest.

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In our own land some laments are heard because of a political system under which an Executive unable to command a majority of the Legislature remains temporarily in office. Other criticisms are directed to the fact that neither of our major parties is wholly consistent in its policies. Bilbo and Wallace are both labeled as Democrats, while from the viewpoint of some Republicans, Wisconsin is something else again.

These are certainly matters for serious consideration, to which our schools and colleges might well be giving more attention than is the case. But any comparison with a confusion like that of France today must lead to the conclusion that, whatever its defects, our system is at least practical and workable. And, as the Eightieth Congress may be expected to demonstrate, it is also responsive to the popular will.

The widespread common sense of the American people has so far retained the two-party system with no attempt to give it legal or other artificial support. One hopes this good sense will continue to be dominant. But it is noteworthy that in New York, the least American of all our cities, a multiplicity of parties, cleverly exploited by the Communists, is taking root in the way that has brought disaster to representative government in Europe.

What happens in New York City is of far less moment to America than New Yorkers think, except that an object lesson can always be helpful as a warning. The country as a whole will probably remain loyal to the two-party system, with the one possessing a majority in full control of the legislative machinery, the other in forthright and patriotic opposition. In most of the States a minority party can get on the ballot as soon as it can demonstrate actual public support. But that public support for minor parties is seldom continuously forthcoming -- a much happier situation than any attempt to outlaw a revolutionary political group by national legislation.

Politics, as the science which it can be, is the proper study of a democratic people. In the laboratory sense it is now demonstrated that forty million Frenchmen can be wrong. And that is primarily because, like other Europeans, they have failed to realize the importance of the two-party system -- a greater safeguard against Communism than any amount of legislative repression.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. III, NO. 47

By Frank C. Hanighen November 20, 1946

Early discussion as to who will get the Republican Presidential nomination has been a crushing bore in former years (since 1932) and, sub regno Roosevelt, unimportant besides. But today it cannot be dismissed as premature or as idle chatter. The Republican swing is so strong and the nullity of Truman and the Democrats so obvious that the question of the Republican nomination assumes primary importance.

Argued in comfortable corners of the National Press Club and other vantage points, the prospect is as follows: When the Republican Convention in 1948 assembles, it will be a recurrence of the situation at the start of the 1940 Convention -- Dewey versus Taft. The dopesters differ as to what will happen next.

Some assert that the Convention will be a repetition of that in 1940; Dewey and Taft will deadlock, and a dark horse will win the race. Therefore, these observers anxiously scan the horizon for another "political Wallingford," like Willkie. Others lay stress on their favorites among the outside candidates now in the field -- Bricker, Stassen, Warren and Vandenberg.

But there's a third view. The year 1948 will not be like 1940, it is asserted. In 1940, the Republicans faced an uphill fight and they needed, among many other things, a "glamour boy" to offset the Roosevelt personality. Today, no one can claim that Truman, predestined for the top role in 1948, is exactly a Powers model. And today, the Republicans apparently have a comparatively easy path before them. Party regularity, a good public record and ability to govern will outweigh the superficies of "vote getting" in choosing the man. It will have to be Dewey or Taft, says this school of thought.

Dewey's radio speech on election night sent cold shivers down the spines of Taft people. It was smart, modest, well phrased and horribly well delivered. That slight operatic tremolo in a velvety radio voice! Nor is that all. Dewey has shown himself a master political strategist, a good administrator and a canny showman. If there is a preference en masse already gathering, Dewey's in the lead.

Taft has a better understanding of and grip on national affairs than Dewey. He is highly intelligent, well-informed, faithful to principles, yet elastic in adjusting himself to events. His integrity and honesty have earned him wide respect. He has his blind spots, and Dewey might out-point him in the ring. But regular Republican politicos like him and trust him. As for Bricker, it is believed that he will support his Ohio colleague.

One other point about Taft is rarely mentioned. Taft is usually labeled "reactionary," in the curiously perverted scale of values now current. As a matter of fact, Taft is now sponsor of three measures for which, were it not for Leftist prejudices, he would draw great applause from so-called "liberals." These are: the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Housing Bill, his own bill to provide Federal aid for education and another to give Federal money to states for medical care of the poor. Taft believes that the free enterprise system has gaps which must be filled by Federal Government assistance. If this goes on, we may behold the curious situation of Taft profiting from -- or handicapped by, dependent on the circumstances -- the well-worn label of "liberal."

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The revolt in the British House of Commons against Bevin's foreign policy rallied between 50 and 60 members of the Labour Party. Of these, it is estimated that 10 are Communist Party members, parading under Labour Party labels. About

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thirty are believed to be more or less faithful "fellow travellers." The remainder, between 10 and 20 members, are "militant socialists." Few observers doubt that the aims and strategy of the revolt were devised by Communist elements in Britain. The objective was to build a foundation for dividing Britain and the United States in the arena of world politics. Thus the affair was the British counterpart of the "Wallace revolt" here last September.

The Left Wing Socialists of Britain served as an instrument. This group dreams of a new militant Socialist international, opposed equally to the Communists and American capitalism. The rebels' manifesto was expressed in the terms of this Socialist "mystique," thus serving adroitly the objectives of the Communists who, as in the Wallace affair, were willing to tolerate a few slaps on Moscow's wrist in order to further their strategy.

This group, defeated in the Commons vote November 18, presents no immediate threat. But the gathering of the fifty or so back benchers does spell potential trouble. Some future situation -- say, an intensification of Britain's domestic and economic troubles -- might lift the number to 100. In such a case, it is believed, the effects will be serious, not only to the cohesion of the Labour Party, but also to continuance of Bevin's foreign policy.

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One of the tests of co-operation between President and Congress will be the matter of Presidential appointments and their reception on the Hill. And considerable interest is developing in Congressional reaction to the board of the United States Atomic Energy Commission. A week before the election, Mr. Truman announced his selections for this board as follows: Mr. David E. Lilienthal, of TVA fame, as Chairman; Dr. Robert F. Bacher, physicist; Rear Admiral Lewis L. Strauss; Mr. Sumner T. Pike, former SEC head; Mr. W. W. Waymack, editor of Cowles papers. Mr. Herbert Marx, it is understood, will be Lilienthal's choice for Secretary. With the exception of Strauss, the panel is rather "Leftist" in complexion. It is also noted that Truman's announcement drew extravagant praise from Mr. Henry Wallace and the Left press, and was probably made with an eye to the election. Many conservaatices may not like the appointment of Mr. Lilienthal, in view of his public power policy. The Atomic Commission Act contains very sweeping powers over industry; and engineers think that the industrial use of atomic energy is not as far off as generally believed. So much for Right Wing reactions.

But, it appears, some of those in the general category of "liberal" also doubt the wisdom of Mr. Truman's selection. Former Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes has issued a characteristically severe blast against the naming of Lilienthal, charging that the TVA man did a lot of wire-pulling to get the job and that he will dominate the Commission when it gets under way. Mr. Ickes points out that others, notably Senator Vandenberg and Secretary Byrnes, tried to get Truman to appoint Senator La Follette instead of Lilienthal. There are other reports that the "Frankfurter crowd" via White House Assistant David K. Niles were very helpful to Lilienthal in his quest for the job, and in heading off the candidacy of Senator La Follette. The elements of a revolt against Mr. Lilienthal, as head of the Commission, are in the making. It remains to be seen whether they develop sufficient strength to disturb this important chapter in the relations between the President and the legislature.

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The game of "make believe" about Spain has been pretty well played out. When the diplomats at Lake Success regard the bristling bayonets of Yugoslavia, they cannot but regard as farcical the Russian accusation that the Franco Government is a "menace to world peace." Besides, it has gotten around that Yugoslavia's protec-

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tor and the chief proponent of the anti-Franco campaign has been sub rosa trying to make a deal with the Spanish dictator. Additionally, news from Madrid indicates that the Franco regime is threatened by bad economic conditions and increasing political opposition. Therefore, some like Dr. Guillermo Belt of Cuba -- who has a long anti-Franco record -- now wish to avoid a repetition of the situation last spring when international attempts to unseat Franco only enabled him to rally support from his people and thereby to obtain a longer lease on power.

It can be confidently expected, moreover, that Britain and the United States, in a common front, will resolutely oppose any punitive proposals against Spain likely to throw that country into political and social chaos, which is an objective of Russian diplomacy. Moscow would like to deny this strategic part of Western Europe to Anglo-American military power. Just as the Russian design is prompted by military strategy, so is the Anglo-American diplomatic front inspired by warnings from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The War Department, as well as the British War Office, regard the Iberian Peninsula as an essential bridgehead, if Russian forces should attempt to push Western armies off the Continent. It is believed that the British General Staff has already discussed this matter with the Spanish generals.

Such military plans are of a "long range" and "emergency" nature. The Joint Chiefs of Staff now have no fear that the Russians will take any such desperate measures in the foreseeable future. Apprehension on this score which rose high last spring has now happily subsided. A period of peace in Europe is envisaged.

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The attitude in Washington towards those dismal subjects -- budget and taxes -- has become more optimistic since the Republican Congressional leaders have given forth on them. When these leaders, on the morrow of the election victory, promised both budget cuts and tax reduction, it sounded a little too good. But with publication of more details of the proposed budget cuts, a balanced and lower budget in 1947 seems rather likely. Some six billion dollars in non-recurring expenditures in this year's budget, it was pointed out, can make the task relatively easy. Thus, an end of subsidies, a drop in veterans' terminal leave pay, lopping off of international financial and relief appropriations alone can go far towards meeting the problem. While a 30 billion dollar budget is scouted, some observers are betting on 33 billion.

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The periodic rumors that the Chinese Nationalist Government is considering a deal with Moscow have popped up again, not without some encouragement from Chinese Nationalist circles. In the past, this sort of talk arose, in part, from Chiang's quite justifiable exasperation with American State Department policy in China. But this time an additional factor has stimulated Nationalist discontent. Nanking has become disturbed by what it regards as a pro-Japanese tendency in American policy in the Far East.

This situation, little noticed in our press, has not escaped Australian eyes. In a news review, November 5, Radio Melbourne says: "A few months ago it was only whispered in China's political circles, but today sagacious but very worried Chinese are saying it openly. America has lost confidence in China and in turn is helping Japan to regain her place as the leading power of the Far East. Most of what they say is true, yet China is in no position to make formal representations concerning this alleged threat to her security. If she complains that America is jilting her, the Americans can quite truthfully reply that they have given more help to China than to most other countries, but the Chinese have only misused it." Far Eastern experts here believe that the Australian radio commentator "has something there"; and they are convinced that the "Japan or China" dilemma will command increasing attention in considering the problems in the Far East.

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Notes and Quotes

Niccolo Tucci, who brings a refreshing talent to the American literary scene, inquires into the nature of the State in the current number of Politics: "Somebody fools somebody, that I knew, it is always a sound assumption to make, but who fools everybody? That has always been a mystery to me. The State? And who is the State? If by the State we mean those who run it, keep it going or from going, as you prefer, then again, we find people who ponder painfully on their lies all day, because they know that they must fool somebody, that's the rule. But they are victims too, they suffer from it before they make others suffer. If you say: Not these people as such, but IT, the State, then I still don't know who fools everybody, because the State does not exist outside of those poor devils there. Suppose we said one day: This morning nobody who is not himself the State will go to any office. Well, the President would certainly not go. Nor would anyone else. All offices would remain empty. That would give you by exclusion the definition of the State: Nothing, Nobody, the Full Void.

"You may then come back at me with the old story that no one in particular, but the union of all of them is the State, and I shall say: What union? Simply a multiplicity of them? Ten busfuls? Twenty officefuls? What makes them the State? What lifts them from the scattered existence of nobodies to the synthesis of State? Because, as individuals, you must grant that they are the real synthesis of nothing multiplied by nothing.

"Think only of the deception: They all write but are not writers. They all think but are not thinkers. They all deal with Dramatis Personae but are not playwrights or actors. They are all specialists in you (in fact, you may not assert who you are unless they tell you), and yet they know nothing about you and don't care. And they are all the State. And with all this they still don't impress anybody. They are all afraid, weak, cowardly, and they all terrorize. So there must be something that confers upon them a new substance, there must be a chemical transformation, a chain reaction which unifies them all into the substance: State. But where is it?"

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"The Jiji Shimbun" -- an American official writes us from Tokyo -- "carried an unusually good editorial criticizing as anti-democratic the current Japanese tendency to 'worship' General MacArthur. I understand that the editorial was brought to MacArthur's attention through censorship channels before publication; and that he personally saw no objection to its publication. That is a tribute to his wisdom and common sense. It shows that he doesn't want just a 'yes-press' but a press that offers sincere and honest opinions.

"However, the day after the Jiji carried the editorial, the Nippon Times was going to republish it in translation. One of the staff sections in GHQ got wind of it, and what did they do but issue orders to stop distribution of the paper. All issues already on the street were picked up and destroyed, and the paper had to publish a fresh edition without the offending editorial. This, I'm quite sure, was done in blithe ignorance of the fact that MacArthur had previously approved the editorial. Otherwise, it doesn't make sense."

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"Washington wits chuckle," reports the Wall Street Journal (November 15), "over the latest 'Wyatt prevaricated house.' Its front porch is a discarded Democratic platform; it has OPA ceilings and agricultural floors; inter-agency screening covers the legal loopholes used for windows, and the plumbing comes from the old White House pipelines. It's fenced in by union pickets and decorated with political hedging."

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